

Guy Savoy.  
Restaurant GUY SAVOY  
Paris, France.  
By Simon Kirby.

One of best, most renowned French chefs, talks to France magazine on the past, the future and his fundamental interest in down to earth products in France.

Guy Savoy had given me a meeting time of 9 am at his restaurant in rue Troyon, 'Restaurant Guy Savoy'. He arrived on time from the door next to the restaurant which is the building that contains his offices. We walked through the huge solid wood, sliding doors and into a private dining room.

The décor (by Jean-Michel Wilmotte) is really of top level design; he has also designed the two other restaurants in Paris belonging to the group. The dark wood beams and panels set into cream coloured walls give a serious, stern yet modern feel. At lunchtime the sun lightens the dining rooms through the glass doors. Bright contemporary art; be it sculpture, collage or paint adorns the walls, breaking up the sober decor with wit and style.

I asked Guy whether or not he could tell me what it was that made a great chef, and a great restaurant. What was it that made people rave about a meal here as the best meal of their lives.

"I left here at 1.30 am; I was back in the office at 8 am this morning. I am not complaining, this is what I do. I do not only design and create food; I do not only make sure everything leaving the kitchen is as it should be; I also keep close tabs on all those who produce food for us. I make sure our entire base products are produced to the highest of standards, for example, I make sure the poultry we use gets the right feeding by tasting the grain the chickens eat at the farm and that goes right the way through the experience to the smile you receive from the valet as you leave. I also make sure the staff understands my philosophy; they greet our diners with honesty, they are truly happy to serve, happy to be part of an experience, a celebration of the palette.

Guy speaks of the United Kingdom and indeed the United States with some measure of philosophy. "You see, in France we are blessed with such a variation of foods. Such diversity does not exist anywhere else. We have, for generations, cultured this diversity without altering it. We do not have the same basis to work from, in France we have a 'savoir vivre' to add to our talent and knowledge of food.

Coming from a rugby background and having played for Bourgoin until my apprenticeship at the age of sixteen I enjoy going to Twickenham and see so many people on the Thames river bank eating picnics before enjoying the game or when I see the British spending time and money on food, I think to myself it is just a problem of the actual contents of that picnic basket that might need looking at not the will to enjoy food and life!"

"Things are changing in the U.K. There are excellent restaurants in England." People like Gordon Ramsay (who worked here for 2 years) will spread that know how. The British have had a love of Bordeaux wines and Cognac for generations; it is not a new or recent concept...they always had the 'savoir vivre'. The missing link has always been the actual contents of the dish.

In the States recently I saw a store called the Whole Food Market, the products sold there are second to none. I was amazed. As a child, I was always told that by the year 2000, we would be taking a tablet per meal, that food as we know it, would not exist. I am glad that once again the specialists were wrong. Very wrong in the case of France where people still make an effort to eat correctly at lunchtime for example.

The Restaurant Guy Savoy recently became international by opening the ‘Guy Savoy at Caesars Palace’ in Las Vegas. His son Frank Savoy is in charge of the restaurant. Franck trained for management and was director of Le Chiberta, the one Michelin star satellite next to l’Arc du Triomphe. Guy proudly adds “as an exclusive”, that he has just signed the agreement for a brand new restaurant in Moscow, opposite the Gallery Tretyakov. “We have taken an ‘hotel particulier’, Jean-Michel Wilmotte will once again look after the architecture and design. I am very excited about the project. One of my chefs here at the Restaurant GUY SAVOY will go out permanently.



Guy Savoy, a watchful eye in the domain which is his kitchen.

For Guy Savoy then, basics are everything. It is very plain to see that enjoying and discovering the talent of Guy Savoy and of course the savours he prepares are all important to him. It is not unusual to see people eating especially made deserts to accompany the particular wine they have chosen. It is not rare to see the several wine, bread, cheese and food waiters tailor making the experience of diners as they question them on their requirements and whether the diner is here for a romantic evening, a business lunch or a culinary ‘Festin’.

The greeting from at least nine people is genuine, warm and friendly. From the aperitif, through to the ‘amuse bouche’ and onto the ‘entrées, plats, cheeses, deserts and accompanying wines the experience is more than exquisite, more than an amazing culinary

experience. It is actually quite difficult to describe. The best, most delicately fine produce, intelligently mixed with ingredients rich in colour, texture and taste, served with service that is simply impossible to better. I among many others have stated “The best meal I have ever had” before leaving the Restaurant Guy Savoy. It is a feeling of literal happiness to have everything you need for a perfect meal, all reunited in one place at that one particular time.

To my request for an anecdote to iterate French / British relations and differences in the world of cuisine, Guy replies instantly; “I once went to the British embassy to see a friend of mine honoured by the British government. I left early and alone to return to the restaurant for opening and to greet my guests. As I walked along a long corridor at the embassy I heard hurried footsteps behind me. As I turned a very out of breath Ambassadors wife said she wanted me to have a copy of her new book, full of good old British cooking.” In exchange I sent on my latest book soon thereafter.

Guy Savoy is a genuine genius. In the simplest way, with such finesse and fluidity he has much to teach us about the art of his cuisine.

#### FACT FILE

1968 Guy Savoy decides he will become a chef. There is no 2<sup>nd</sup> choice; it's a chef or nothing.  
1968-1976

Guy does several apprenticeships including the famous ‘chocolatier’ Louis Marchand, then at ‘Les frères Troisgros’, Chez Lasserre, au Lion d’Or in Geneva and finally at the Oasis in La Napoule (south of France)

1977-1979

Claude Vergé puts Guy in charge at La Barriere de Clichy.

1980

Guy opens his first restaurant in rue Duret, Paris. A year later he obtained his first Michelin star, the second came in 1985.

1987

The ‘Restaurant Guy Savoy’ moves to rue Troyon.

1987-1997

Guy opens 7 bistro type restaurants and writes a book covering the menus and dishes emanating from the bistro like annexes.

1997

Guy is honoured by his presence in the Larousse dictionary.

1998-1999

‘Quatre saisons pour un Festin’ the DVD produced by Canal + explains and indeed shows Guy, with his producers on their farms, all over France, choosing the best produce. The DVD ends in the Guy Savoy restaurant at Christmas, with all the produce farmers sitting down to a meal, prepared by Guy, using only the products of those around the table, be it wine, poultry, meats, bread, cheese, seafood, salad, fruit and vegetables.

2000

Guy Savoy receives the ‘legion d’honneur’. Also in 2000 Guy completely redesigns the restaurant in rue Troyon by architect Jean Michel Wilmotte.

2002

Guy is elected chef of the year by his peers. Also in 2002, he receives his third Michelin star.

2003

Jean-Michel Wilmotte is employed once again. This time, his brief is to put together designs for the forthcoming 'satellite' restaurants that Guy is opening. L'Atelier Maitre Albert and the last to open was La Chiberta, 20 yards from l'Arc de Triomphe and a Michelin star of its own.

Open Tuesday through Saturday for dinner  
7:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

Lunch Tuesday to Friday  
12 noon to 2:30 p.m.

Weekly closing :  
Saturday noon, Sunday, Monday

Annual closing :  
From end of July to end of August, Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations

Restaurant GUY SAVOY

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Email: [reserv@guysavoy.com](mailto:reserv@guysavoy.com)

Chefs de Cuisine: Michel Roncières and Laurent Solivérés

Chef Pâtissier: Christian Boudard

Maître d'Hôtel : Christophe Leboursier

Average price 180 euros without drinks

Chef's choice 245 euros without drinks

Menu 'Textures et Saveurs' 295 euros without drinks

Restaurant Manager and Wine Director: Eric Mancio

Chef Propriétaire: Guy Savoy